Gay Times

The rise of the lazy dom top

The tops are trying, with varying levels of success, to embody Alexander Skarsgård's sexy all-powerful energy in Pillion.

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Recently, while working a shift behind the bar, one of the hottest men that has ever lived – around 6'5", floppy curls, chiseled face, and just enough muscle to be defined without giving gym bro – walked over and motioned for me to lean in. As I did so, he cupped my face in his hands and whispered in my ear, "[redacted] going to make me a double gin and tonic but you're going to charge me for a single, got it?" The A[redacted]s authoritative hushed tone, along with his Dorian Gray-looks, made the sub in me respond before my

professional self could, nodding in confirmation. “Good boy,” he replied, and then kissed me on the lips. As I dutifully made his drink, a few things went through my head. Firstly, thank God my manager was not present. Two, that this man was hot and he knew he was hot. Three, why did he ask for a discount rather than just a free drink? And finally, that this man clearly had watched *Pillion*.

Multiple conversations of late with submissive-identifying friends had us discussing our shared experience of an increase of dom tops in our Grindr messages, and how that rise has seemingly coincided with the release of A24’s dom-com movie late last year. *Pillion*, one of the first movies from a major studio to offer a raw look at the queer BDSM and leather scene, is also considered one of the most successful indie movies of 2025 despite its limited theatrical release. Its graphic sex scenes became talking points for scandalised talk show hosts, op-ed writers, and even reached the feeds of your straight friends. Based on the Adam Mars-Jones novel *Box Hill*, we watch Colin (played by Dudley from *Harry Potter*) fall headfirst into a world of leather biker gang orgies, assless singlets, Prince Alberts, and pup masks, all while being blindly and faithfully led by commanding otter Ray, played by the stunning Alexander Skarsgård. We watch as Colin learns what he wants from a relationship and how Ray eventually responds to that newfound agency.

“There isn’t a single consent conversation in the film, perhaps because that could be boring,” Dr. Lori Beth Bisbey, a self-professed leatherwoman, told *The Guardian*. “I think it’s perfectly ethical not to include what may have been a lengthy negotiation between Colin and Ray, but on the flipside, sometimes there isn’t a conversation, and people decide to take risks. I’m all for people making their own decisions about taking those risks, as long as they’re able to assess them.”

Pillion is a far more intense version of the sub-dom relationship than many within that world enter – with Ray expecting the power dynamic to never be turned off or paused, not even when they’re asleep. Yet, purely anecdotally, it seems as though more and more tops are trying to recreate Ray’s authoritative, all-powerful energy. Grindr has always been a space to expect direct and graphic opening messages. However, more and more profiles – with their torso for a profile picture, if they even have one – are entering chats with demands or stating they’re going to [redacted] your [redacted] until you [redacted] you little [redacted] [redacted]. Perhaps they assume from the wide eyes, innocent twinky face, and the “sub” tag in your profile

that you're into that. And maybe you are, but there's a clear lack of understanding about how the roles within BDSM lie on a spectrum – how, for some subs, a form of connection needs to be built before they're comfortable and willing to submit.

"Tops that say they're dom often really aren't, but try to play along, and don't really know how to play the psychological game, so it becomes more theatre or just plain bossing around rather than a psychological relationship of power," one sub friend, Jack*, shares. It sometimes feels like these DM dom tops aren't necessarily looking to move the conversation out of messages so much as recreate a fantasy in their imaginations. They see it as a form of control to have you on their hook and keep you within their wank bank. "There's also the other side of dom tops who take it too seriously to the point where it becomes a bit cringe or a bit too intense. I do sympathise with them as it's hard to get the balance right," Sam*, another sub friend, states. In both cases, it's the lack of being on the same wavelength that stops the dynamic from being hot for the sub too. It's something even straight female sub friends have shared with me, finding that dominant-identifying guys will demand photos or sexual acts from them but will lose interest or ghost when they realise the sub expects something in return for their obedience.

There is evidence to suggest domination is an increasing fantasy. While there's a lack of research into queer BDSM culture, there has been data on changing perceptions more generally. According to a YouGov survey in 2025, 21% of young men reported having been erotically choked, while 27% reported being the choker, and 41% said they haven't choked their partner but would like to explore it. Additionally, the survey found that Gen Z men are far less likely to find BDSM practices such as choking, spanking, or slapping taboo, with only 40% reporting they considered it extreme compared to 80% of men aged 60+. Arguably, choking is a lot riskier at that age though.

The dom top (non-practicing) also has a larger pool of recent queer media to inspire their fantasy than *Pillion*, albeit these often showcase the importance of conversation. One image from Showtime's *Fellow Travellers* quickly took over social media and gay men's hidden photo galleries: Jonathan Bailey's T proves to Matt Bomer's Hawk that he's his "boy," sucking his toes before dutifully fulfilling Hawk's a showing "what his boy really wants." It's a dynamic they both play into and initiate; Hawk finds the balance

between commanding and allowing Tim to submit on his own terms. As a result, we watch the incredibly hot dom-sub relationship between them evolve over their decades-spanning love. “Shut up and drink your milk,” Hawk later tells Tim after a while of not speaking, holding a bottle up to his mouth. Tim has the option to reject it, and it seems for a moment like he might, before he obediently and messily downs it like a uni student discovering jägerbombs. In another scene, Hawk asks Tim, “Who do you belong to?” and with wide, deceptively innocent eyes, the latter hands himself over to be thrown around like a rag doll. “Why can’t I say no to you?” Tim muses at one point. Within their dynamic, he has the option to, but the carnal pull for Hawk means he doesn’t want to.

In *Heated Rivalry*, already the most talked-about show of the year, we watch as the two enemy hockey players take their ice-rink friction to the bedroom. The aloof Ilya often takes on the more dominant, active role in their relationship, and even when he’s the one giving, he’ll only do so after the latter has “asked nicely.” Though less of a BDSM relationship than the power play we see in *Pillion* or *Fellow Travellers*, we do see a sub-dom sex scene between the two that is hot but also confusing due to the lack of understanding between the pair. After months of not speaking, the two are in the bedroom when Ilya, sitting shirt open with a whiskey, commands Shane to touch himself. The latter obliges, and it’s only when Shane says, “I need you,” that Ilya gives him what he desires. And yet, Shane notably realises there is something off and cold about this experience, and it leaves him second-guessing the dynamic between them.

“With BDSM and D/S, I encourage people who say 'I'm this' or 'I'm that' to pause and ask themselves to clarify: what does that actually mean to you?” sex educator Lola Jean shared with *Feeld*. "These words mean different things to each of us, and new language is always emerging to help us define ourselves. What matters is staying curious about what an identity means to the person you're exploring it with."

For some subs, the rise in amateur dom tops means they’ve focused their search for sex and intimacy on places where they’re more likely to find someone understanding of BDSM practices. “Most of the dom tops I’ve hooked up with over the past year are much kinkier, or I’ve chatted with them on Recon and th they’ve taken the role more seriously,” Sam tells me. Recon is a kink-specific queer dating app wh s are expected to be far more clear and precise about their desires, interests, and boundaries. “I found it really

hard to find good dom tops on Grindr, so I consciously made the choice not to search for it on there," he adds. For the girls sleeping with straight male dom tops, I don't know what to suggest. It's a war out there.

It's expected that with the increase of queer non-traditional sex in media, more people are likely to explore alternate forms of intimacy with differing levels of success. Some of these dom tops are here to stay and will learn with experience; others will move on to the next fantasy. My personal prediction is that many of them will become gooner bros.

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